EVENTS

Science & Technology at The Jenks

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

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By Ron Latanision Nov 4, 2023

Ever since local resident David Wilson asked me to be the first speaker of the Jenks Center's newly formed Science & Technology discussion group, I've been completely engaged in the finding good speakers and eventually began hosting the discussions. All members of the public are invited to join us by registering on the Jenks website.

The Jenks Center sponsors a science and technology forum which meets virtually twice a month. This began in the fall of 2015 when Judy Katz of the Jenks Center asked David to lead a discussion group on science and technology. The hope was that it might engage members of our community who have interest in things technological. David and I were faculty colleagues at MIT for many years. He asked me to give the inaugural talk. In our conversations about a topic, David said, "I've been hearing discussions on concern that science and technology is getting out of control. I wonder if something along the lines of 'Are science and technology going too fast?' or 'Would you like to have a home robot smarter than you?'"

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Questions like these are very much in the news today with such issues as the meteoric rise of generative artificial intelligence in the marketplace and into our homes and workplaces. On that basis David and I settled on *Unintended Consequences of Science and Technology* for my presentation on Oct. 1, 2015. David served as moderator for the S&T group thereafter. When he passed away a few of years ago, Martin O'Donnell, Shukong Ou and I followed David's lead with the discussion group. Soon after, we assigned David's name to the program. David Wilson was a classic. It is fitting that The Forum that grew from this vision of the discussion group bears his name, The Wilson Science & Technology Forum.

I now host the forum which meets every two weeks in Winchester. We meet by Zoom at 10:30 a.m. on the second and fourth Friday of each month. Our agenda for this fall is heavily oriented toward energy issues and the electric grid. We have heard from Eric Johnson of ISO New England in September, Zeyneb Magavi of HEET in October. Upcoming speakers include Chris Knittel of MIT's Sloan School on Nov. 10, and State Senator Mike Barrett on Nov. 17.

My goal for the forum is twofold: to provide a platform in our technology-intense world for the public to understand the evolution of technology that impacts our lives; and to engage teachers and especially students who will determine our technology future to make wise decisions as they grow into our social fabric. School is in session when we meet, but the forum is typically recorded and subsequently broadcast on WinCAM. You can get a feel for our activities (recordings of previous meetings, scheduled upcoming events, etc.) by looking at our blog: https://jenksst.blogspot.com/

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We met in person until COVID but are now using Zoom on a regular basis. The Forum is open to anyone who is interested. Our typical audience includes doctors, lawyers, Westinghouse and GE technologists, Apollo engineers, nuclear fusion experts, an occasional Nobel Laureate, a noted historian, a retread MIT professor, some Winton Club Stage crew members and some generalists who keep us honest! Zoom offers us the unusual opportunity to invite authors from beyond Winchester to speak with us and we've had speakers from Washington, D.C., State College PA, Los Angeles, Toronto, and Paris. We have invited and hope to meet with the Dean of Engineering at Tel Aviv University who is scheduled to join us from Tel Aviv on December 22. Dean Noam Eliaz was a former post-doctoral student of mine at MIT.

Our meetings are open to anyone with an interest. You can register and find our link on the Jenks Center website www.jenkscenter.org

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Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence hosting 23rd Trivia Bee

Winchester's brightest fifth graders and adults will gather soon to compete in a fierce trivia competition that will raise money for Winchester schools. The Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence (WFEE), a nonprofit that provides grants for Winchester's public schools, will host its 23rd annual trivia bee March 11

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